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From the Office of the Director of Health

Economy Woes Impact WIC Clients

The Springfield-Greene County Health Department's Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program is beginning to see an impact from the strain on the U.S. economy. Program staff say an increase in food cost, and an increased client load are a direct result of financially difficult times.

"We've had to change our food package because of higher prices on milk, eggs, cereal and juice," says senior nutritionist Julie Randolph, BS, IBCLC. "We're also seeing an increase in the number of people who are seeking out our services."

In February 2007 the monthly caseload was 5,570 clients. In February 2008 (the most recent month in which numbers are available) the caseload has grown to 6,647 participants.

A recent adjustment to the eligibility guidelines will also allow more people access to WIC assistance. Last year a family of four could not make more than \$37,000 to remain eligible for WIC. This year the same family can make \$39,220 and still receive WIC services.

"The goal of our program is to improve the health of pregnant women, new mothers, infants and children up through five years old," adds Randolph. "We do that by providing nutrition and breastfeeding education, screening, risk assessment and counseling. We also help supplement participant's diet with nutritious foods by providing vouchers to buy items like milk, cheese, eggs, cereal, peanut butter and juice."

Statewide changes to the WIC food package go into effect May 1, 2008. For a complete food package list, visit <http://springfieldmo.gov/health/pdf/wicFood.pdf>.

The Women, Infants and Children program is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer. Services are provided on a nondiscriminatory basis. For income eligibility guidelines, visit the WIC program Web page at <http://springfieldmo.gov/health/wic.html>. The WIC clinic is located at 290 East Central and is open Monday through Thursday 7:30 am to 7:00 pm and Friday 7:30 am to 5:00 pm. Call (417) 864-1079 for more information.

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